

DC releases aircraft noise study showing adverse impacts

On December 12, 2018, the DC Department of Energy and Environment recently released a two year study of aircraft noise in Washington, DC. Written by experts in the field of aviation and noise assessment the Report reached some important conclusions:

- Noise modeling and MWAA's noise monitoring terminal measurement data confirmed an eastward shift of the DCA airplane noise environment.
- Noise measurements conducted in three Georgetown schools indicated that the ANSI classroom acoustical standards were exceeded on numerous occasions; based on the currently available research, excessive aircraft noise impacts student learning and achievement. Although not measured, we would expect there to be exceedances at all Georgetown-Palisades area schools.
- Nighttime aircraft noise levels inside of northwest DC residences are high enough to awaken between 12 to 33% of the population.
- Approximately 400 flights per day from DCA produce noise levels in northwest DC which at or above 65 dBA, the level at which speech communication begins to be impaired.
- Noise measurements and analysis indicate that North Flow (departure) noise is significantly louder than South Flow (arrival) noise, and North Flow noise is the primary determinant of the overall DNL noise level. (*DCA Airplane Noise Assessment* at p. 135)

The Report also made several recommendations to mitigate the increase in aircraft noise from DCA on pages 136-141 including the following:

- There has been no change in the MWAA nighttime noise rule which used to effectively restrict operations between 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM. MWAA should seek FAA concurrence in revising the rule to limit night time operations to the most quiet class of aircraft and redirect louder aircraft to use DWI at night.
- MWAA should request the FAA to create a better balance of north vs South Flow operations. DCA used to operate at about a 50/50% balance but is now in north flow close to 70% of the time. North flow departures are the most significant source of noise for DC.
- The MWAA Community Noise Working Group needs to have an independent "Subject Matter Expert" or SME to provide technical support for the Working Group and MWAA in assessing solutions to aircraft noise. MWAA should provide the funds to support the Working Group and its own efforts to mitigate aircraft noise.
- The last Part 150 Noise Compatibility Study by MWAA was completed in 2004 before all of the Next Gen shifts in flight paths. MWAA should conduct a new study as outlined in 14 CFR Part 150, Appendix A to display MWAA's awareness and dedication to solving and/or lessening the impacts of aircraft noise on surrounding communities.

The entire study can be found on the DOEE website at <https://doee.dc.gov/node/1217496>

The DC Fair Skies Coalition intends to pursue the recommendations in the Report focusing on the items list above. Coalition membership: Citizens Association of Georgetown; Burleith Citizens Association; Foxhall Citizens Association; Hillandale Citizens Association; Colony Hill Neighborhood Association; Palisades Citizens Association; Foggy Bottom Association; Georgetown University.